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COMMENTARY ON

PSALM 37

C. H. SPURGEON



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by C. H. Spurgeon

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Exposition

TITLE. Of David. There is but this word to denote the authorship; whether it was a song or a meditation we are not told. It was written by David in his old age Ps 37:25, and is the more valuable as the record of so varied an experience.

SUBJECT. The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future; and fretfulness and repining are most impressively forbidden. It is a Psalm in which the Lord hushes most sweetly the too common repinings of his people, and calms their minds as to his present dealings with his own chosen flock, and the wolves by whom they are surrounded. It contains eight great precepts, is twice illustrated by autobiographical statements, and *abounds in remarkable contrasts*.

DIVISION. The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves. It is an alphabetical Psalm: in somewhat broken order, the first letters of the verses follow the Hebrew alphabet. This may have been not only a poetical invention, but a help to memory. The reader is requested to read the Psalm through without comment before he turns to our exposition.

Verse 1. The Psalm opens with the first precept. It is alas! too common for believers in their hours of adversity to think themselves harshly dealt with when they see persons utterly destitute of religion and honesty, rejoicing in abundant prosperity. Much needed is the command, *Fret not thyself because of evildoers*. To fret is to worry, to have the heartburn, to fume, to become vexed. Nature is very apt to kindle a fire of jealousy when it sees lawbreakers riding on horses, and obedient subjects walking in the mire: it is a lesson learned only in the school of grace, when one comes to view the most paradoxical providences with the devout complacency of one who is sure that the Lord is righteous in all his acts. It seems hard to carnal judgments that the best meat should go to the dogs, while loving children pine for want of it. *Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity*. The same advice under another shape. When one is poor,

despised, and in deep trial, our old Adam naturally becomes envious of the rich and great; and when we are conscious that we have been more righteous than they, the devil is sure to be at hand with blasphemous reasonings. Stormy weather may curdle even the cream of humanity. Evil men instead of being envied, are to be viewed with horror and aversion; yet their loaded tables, and gilded trappings, are too apt to fascinate our poor half opened eyes. Who envies the fat bullock the ribbons and garlands which decorate him as he is led to the shambles? Yet the case is a parallel one; for ungodly rich men are but as beasts fattened for the slaughter.

Verse 2. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass.* The scythe of death is sharpening. Green grows the grass, but quick comes the scythe. The destruction of the ungodly will be speedy, sudden, sure, overwhelming, irretrievable. The grass cannot resist or escape the mower. *And wither as the green herb.* The beauty of the herb dries up at once in the heat of the sun, and so all the glory of the wicked shall disappear at the hour of death. Death kills the ungodly man like grass, and wrath withers him like hay; he dies, and his name rots. How complete an end is made of the man whose boasts had no end! Is it worth while to waste ourselves in fretting about the insect of an hour, an ephemeral which in the same day is born and dies? Within believers there is a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever; why should they envy mere flesh, and the glory of it, which are but as grass, and the flower thereof?

Verse 3. *Trust in the Lord.* Here is the second precept, and one appropriate to the occasion. Faith cures fretting. Sight is cross-eyed, and views things only as they seem, hence her envy: faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace. *And do good.* True faith is actively obedient. Doing good is a fine remedy for fretting. There is a joy in holy activity which drives away the rust of

discontent. *So shalt thou dwell in the land.* In "the land" which floweth with milk and honey; the Canaan of the covenant. Thou shalt not wander in the wilderness of murmuring, but abide in the promised land of content and rest. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Very much of our outward depends upon the inward: where there is heaven in the heart there will be heaven in the house. *And verily thou shalt be fed, or shepherded.* To integrity and faith necessities are guaranteed. The good shepherd will exercise his pastoral care over all believers. In truth they shall be fed, and fed on truth. The promise of God shall be their perpetual banquet; they shall neither lack in spirituals nor in temporals. Some read this as an exhortation, "*Feed on truth;*" certainly this is good cheer, and banishes for ever the hungry heart burnings of envy.

Verse 4. There is an ascent in this third precept. He who was first bidden not to fret, was then commanded actively to trust, and now is told with holy desire to delight in God. *Delight thyself also in the Lord.* Make Jehovah the joy and rejoicing of thy spirit. Bad men delight in carnal objects; do not envy them if they are allowed to take their fill in such vain idols; look thou to thy better delight, and fill thyself to the full with thy more sublime portion. In a certain sense imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion—take care to delight in yours, and so far from envying you will pity them. There is no room for fretting if we remember that God is ours, but there is every incentive to sacred enjoyment of the most elevated and ecstatic kind. Every name, attribute, word, or deed of Jehovah, should be delightful to us, and in meditating thereon our soul should be as glad as is the epicure who feeds delicately with a profound relish for his dainties. *And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* A pleasant duty is here rewarded with another pleasure. Men who delight in God desire or ask for nothing but what will please God; hence it is safe to give them *carte blanche*. Their will is subdued to God's will,

and now they may have what they will. Our innermost desires are here meant, not our casual wishes; there are many things which nature might desire which grace would never permit us to ask for; these deep, prayerful, *asking* desires are those to which the promise is made.

Verse 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord.* Roll the whole burden of life upon the Lord. Leave with Jehovah not thy present fretfulness merely, but all thy cares; in fact, submit the whole tenor of thy way to him. Cast away anxiety, resign thy will, submit thy judgment, leave all with the God of all. What a medicine is this for expelling envy! What a high attainment does this fourth precept indicate! How blessed must he be who lives every day in obedience to it! *Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.* Our destiny shall be joyfully accomplished if we confidently entrust all to our Lord. We may serenely sing—

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
O lead me by thine own right hand,
Choose out the path for me."

"Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to thy rest."

"I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might;
But choose Thou for me, O my God,
So shall I walk aright."

"Take thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill;
As ever best to thee may seem,
Choose thou my good and ill."

The ploughman sows and harrows, and then leaves the harvest to God. What can he do else? He cannot cover the heavens with clouds, or command the rain, or bring forth the sun or create the dew. He does well to leave the whole matter with God; and so to all of us it is truest wisdom, having obediently trusted in God, to leave results in his hands, and expect a blessed issue.

Verse 6. *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light.* In the matter of personal reputation we may especially be content to be quiet, and leave our vindication with the Judge of all the earth. The more we fret in this case the worse for us. Our strength is to sit still. The Lord will clear the slandered. If we look to his honour, he will see to ours. It is wonderful how, when faith learns to endure calumny with composure, the filth does not defile her, but falls off like snowballs from a wall of granite. Even in the worst cases, where a good name is for awhile darkened, Providence will send a clearing like the dawning light, which shall increase until the man once censured shall be universally admired. *And thy judgment as the noonday.* No shade of reproach shall remain. The man shall be in his meridian of splendour. The darkness of his sorrow and his ill repute shall both flee away.

Verse 7. *Rest in the Lord.* This fifth is a most divine precept, and requires much grace to carry it out. To hush the spirit, to be silent before the Lord, to wait in holy patience the time for clearing up the difficulties of Providence—that is what every gracious heart should aim at. "Aaron held his peace:" "I opened not my mouth, because

thou didst it." A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart. *And wait patiently for him.* Time is nothing to him; let it be nothing to thee. God is worth waiting for. "He never is before his time, he never is too late." In a story we wait for the end to clear up the plot; we ought not to prejudge the great drama of life, but stay till the closing scene, and see to what a finish the whole arrives. *Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.* There is no good, but much evil, in worrying your heart about the present success of graceless plotters: be not enticed into premature judgments—they dishonour God, they weary yourself. Determine, let the wicked succeed as they may, that you will treat the matter with indifference, and never allow a question to be raised as to the righteousness and goodness of the Lord. What if wicked devices succeed and your own plans are defeated! there is more of the love of God in your defeats than in the successes of the wicked.

Verse 8. *Cease from anger and forsake wrath.* Especially anger against the arrangements of Providence, and jealousies of the temporary pleasures of those who are so soon to be banished from all comfort. Anger anywhere is madness, here it is aggravated insanity. Yet since anger will try to keep us company, we must resolutely forsake it. *Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.* By no reasonings and under no circumstances be led into such a course. Fretfulness lies upon the verge of great sin. Many who have indulged a murmuring disposition have at last come to sin, in order to gain their fancied rights. Beware of carping at others, study to be yourself found in the right way; and as you would dread outward sin, tremble at inward repining.

Verse 9. *For evil doers shall be cut off.* Their death shall be a penal judgment; not a gentle removal to a better state, but an execution in

which the axe of justice will be used. *But those that wait upon the Lord*—those who in patient faith expect their portion in another life—*they shall inherit the earth*. Even in this life they have the most of real enjoyment, and in the ages to come theirs shall be the glory and the triumph. Passion, according to Bunyan's parable, has his good things first, and they are soon over; Patience has his good things last, and they last for ever.

Verse 10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be*. When bad men reach to greatness, the judgments of God frequently sweep them away; their riches melt, their power decays, their happiness turns to wretchedness; they themselves cease any longer to be numbered with the living. The shortness of life makes us see that the glitter of the wicked great is not true gold. O wherefore, tried believer, dost thou envy one who in a little while will lie lower than the dust? *Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be*. His house shall be empty, his chair of office vacant, his estate without an owner; he shall be utterly blotted out, perhaps cut off by his own debauchery, or brought to a deathbed of penury by his own extravagance. Gone like a passing cloud—forgotten as a dream—where are his boastings and hectorings, and where the pomp which made poor mortals think the sinner blest?

Verse 11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth*. Above all others they shall enjoy life. Even if they suffer, their consolations shall overtop their tribulations. By inheriting the land is meant obtaining covenant privileges and the salvation of God. Such as are truly humble shall take their lot with the rest of the heirs of grace, to whom all good things come by a sacred birthright. *And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace*. Peace they love and peace they shall have. If they find not abundance of gold, abundance of peace will serve their turn far better. Others find joy in strife, and thence arises their

misery in due time, but peace leads on to peace, and the more a man loves it the more shall it come to him. In the halcyon period of the latter days, when universal peace shall make glad the earth, the full prophetic meaning of words like these will be made plain.

Verses 12-15. Here is the portrait of a proud oppressor armed to the teeth.

Verse 12. *The wicked plotteth against the just.* Why can he not let the good man alone? Because there is enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman. Why not attack him fairly? Why plot and scheme? Because it is according to the serpent's nature to be very subtle. Plain sailing does not suit those who are on board of "The Apollyon." *And gnashed upon him with his teeth.* The wicked show by their gestures what they would do if they could; if they cannot gnaw they will gnash; if they may not bite they will at least bark. This is precisely what the graceless world did with "that just One, "the Prince of Peace. Yet he took no vengeance upon them, but like a silent lamb received injuries in patience.

Verse 13. *The Lord shall laugh at him.* The godly man needs not trouble himself, but leave well deserved vengeance to be dealt out by the Lord, who will utterly deride the malice of the good man's enemies. Let the proud scorner gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth; he has one to deal with who will look down upon him and his ravings with serene contempt. *For he seeth that his day is coming.* The evil man does not see how close his destruction is upon his heels; he boasts of crushing others when the foot of justice is already uplifted to trample him as the mire of the streets. Sinners, in the hand of an angry God, and yet plotting against his children! Poor souls, thus to run upon the point of Jehovah's spear.

Verse 14. *The wicked have drawn out the sword.* They hold their weapon out of its sheath, and watch for a time to use it. *And have bent their bow.* One weapon is not enough, they carry another ready for action. They carry so strong a bow that they have trodden upon it to bend it—they will lose nothing for want of force or readiness. *To cast down the poor and needy.* These are their game, the objects of their accursed malice. These cowards attack not their equals, but seek out those excellent ones who, from the gentleness of their spirits and the poverty of their estates, are not able to defend themselves. Note how our meek and lowly Lord was beset by cruel foes, armed with all manner of weapons to slay him. *And to slay such as be of upright conversation.* Nothing short of the overthrow and death of the just will content the wicked. The sincere and straightforward are hated by the crafty schemers who delight in unrighteousness. See, then, the enemies of the godly doubly armed, and learn how true were our Lord's words, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Verse 15. *Their sword shall enter into their own heart.* Like Haman they shall be hanged upon the gallows built by themselves for Mordecai. Hundreds of times has this been the case. Saul, who sought to slay David, fell on his own sword; and the bow, his favourite weapon, the use of which he taught the children of Israel, was not able to deliver him on Gilboa. *And their bows shall be broken.* Their inventions of evil shall be rendered useless. Malice outwits itself. It drinks the poisoned cup which it mixed for another, and burns itself in the fire which it kindled for its neighbour. Why need we fret at the prosperity of the wicked when they are so industriously ruining themselves while they fancy they are injuring the saints? The next nine verses mainly describe the character and

blessedness of the godly, and the light is brought out with a few black touches descriptive of the wicked and their doom.

Verse 16. *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.* This is a fine proverb. The little of one good man is contrasted with the riches of many wicked, and so the expression is rendered the more forcible. There is more happiness in the godly dinner of herbs than in the stalled ox of profane rioters. In the original there is an allusion to the noise of a multitude, as if to hint at the turmoil and hurly burly of riotous wealth, and to contrast it with the quiet of the humbler portion of the godly. We would sooner hunger with John than feast with Herod; better feed on scant fare with the prophets in Obadiah's cave than riot with the priests of Baal. A man's happiness consists not in the heaps of gold which he has in store. Content finds *multum in parvo*, while for a wicked heart the whole world is too little.

Verse 17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken.* Their power to do mischief shall be effectually taken away, for the arms which they lifted up against God shall be crushed even to the bone. God often makes implacable men incapable men. What is a more contemptible sight than toothless malice, armless malevolence! *But the Lord upholdeth the righteous.* Their cause and course shall be safe, for they are in good keeping. The sword of two edges smites the wicked and defends the just.

Verse 18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright.* His foreknowledge made him laugh at the proud, but in the case of the upright he sees a brighter future, and treats them as heirs of salvation. Ever is this our comfort, that all events are known to our God, and that nothing in our future can take him at unawares. No arrow can pierce us by accident, no danger smite us by stealth;

neither in time nor eternity can any unforeseen ill occur to us. Futurity shall be but a continual development of the good things which the Lord has laid up in store for us. *And their inheritance shall be for ever.* Their inheritance fades not away. It is entailed, so that none can deprive them of it, and preserved, so that none shall destroy it. Eternity is the peculiar attribute of the believer's portion: what they have on earth is safe enough, but what they shall have in heaven is theirs without end.

Verse 19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.* Calamities will come, but deliverances will come also. As the righteous never reckoned upon immunity from trouble, they will not be disappointed when they are called to take their share of it, but the rather they will cast themselves anew upon their God, and prove again his faithfulness and love. God is not a friend in the sunshine only, he is a friend indeed and a friend in need. *And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* Their barrel of meal and cruse of oil shall last out the day of distress, and if ravens do not bring them bread and meat, the supply of their needs shall come in some other way, for their bread shall be given them. Our Lord stayed himself upon this when he hungered in the wilderness, and by faith he repelled the tempter; we too may be enabled not to fret ourselves in any wise to do evil by the same consideration. If God's providence is our inheritance, we need not worry about the price of wheat. Mildew, and smut, and bent, are all in the Lord's hands. Unbelief cannot save a single ear from being blasted, but faith, if it do not preserve the crop, can do what is better, namely, preserve our joy in the Lord.

Verse 20. *But the wicked shall perish.* Whatever phantom light may mock their present, their future is black with dark, substantial night. Judgment has been given against them, they are but reserved for execution. Let them flaunt their scarlet and fine linen, and fare

sumptuously every day; the sword of Damocles is above their heads, and if their wits were a little more awake, their mirth would turn to misery. *The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs.* As the sacrificial fat was all consumed upon the altar, so shall the ungodly utterly vanish from the place of their honour and pride. How can it be otherwise? If the stubble dares to contend with the flame, to what end can it hope to come? *They shall consume.* As dry wood, as heaps of leaves, as burning coals, they shall soon be gone, and gone altogether, for *into smoke shall they consume away. Sic transit gloria mundi.* A puff is the end of all their puffing. Their fuming ends in smoke. They made themselves fat, and perished in their own grease. Consumers of the good they tried to be, and consumed they shall be.

Verse 21. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.* Partly because he will not, but mainly because he cannot. Want follows upon waste, and debt remains undischarged. Often are the wicked thus impoverished in this life. Their wanton extravagance brings them down to the usurer's door and to the bankrupt's suit. *But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth,* Mercy has given to him, and therefore he gives in mercy. He is generous and prosperous. He is not a borrower, but a giver. So far as the good man can do it, he lends an ear to the requests of need, and instead of being impoverished by what he imparts, he grows richer, and is able to do more. He does not give to encourage idleness, but in real mercy, which supposes real need. The text suggests to us how much better it generally is to give than to lend. Generally, lending comes to giving in the end, and it is as well to anticipate the fact, and by a little liberality forestall the inevitable. If these two sentences describe the wicked and the righteous, the writer of these lines has reason to know that in and about the city of London the wicked are very numerous.

Verse 22. *For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth.* God's benediction is true wealth after all. True happiness, such as the covenant secures to all the chosen of heaven, lies wrapped up in the divine favour. *And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.* His frown is death; nay, more, It is hell.

Verse 23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* All his course of life is graciously ordained, and in lovingkindness all is fixed, settled, and maintained. No reckless fate, no fickle chance rules us; our every step is the subject of divine decree. *He delighteth in his way.* As parents are pleased with the tottering footsteps of their babes. All that concerns a saint is interesting to his heavenly Father. God loves to view the holy strivings of a soul pressing forward to the skies. In the trials and the joys of the faithful, Jesus has fellowship with them, and delights to be their sympathising companion.

Verse 24. *Though he fall.* Disasters and reverses may lay him low; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything; like Joseph, be put in prison; like Jonah, be cast into the deep. *He shall not be utterly cast down.* He shall not be altogether prostrate. He shall be brought on his knees, but not on his face; or, if laid prone for a moment, he shall be up again ere long. No saint shall fall finally or fatally. Sorrow may bring us to the earth, and death may bring us to the grave, but lower we cannot sink, and out of the lowest of all we shall arise to the highest of all. *For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* Condescendingly, with his own hand, God upholds his saints; he does not leave them to mere delegated agency, he affords personal assistance. Even in our falls the Lord gives a measure of sustaining. Where grace does not keep from going down, it shall save from keeping down. Job had double wealth at last, Joseph reigned over Egypt, Jonah was safely landed. It is not that the saints are strong, or

wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every fall, but because God is their helper, and therefore none can prevail against them.

Verse 25. This was David's observation, *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* It is not *my* observation just as it stands, for I have relieved the children of undoubtedly good men, who have appealed to me as common mendicants. But this does not cast a doubt upon the observation of David. He lived under a dispensation more outward, and more of this world than the present rule of personal faith. Never are the righteous forsaken; that is a rule without exception. Seldom indeed do their seed beg bread; and although it does occasionally occur, through dissipation, idleness, or some other causes on the part of their sons, yet doubtless it is so rare a thing that there are many alive who never saw it. Go into the union house and see how few are the children of godly parents; enter the gaol and see how much rarer still is the case. Poor minster's sons often become rich. I am not old, but I have seen families of the poor godly become rich, and have seen the Lord reward the faithfulness of the father in the success of the son, so that I have often thought that the best way to endow one's seed with wealth is to become poor for Christ's sake. In the Indian mission of the "Baptist Missionary Society, "this is abundantly illustrated.

Verse 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth.* The righteous are constantly under generous impulses; they do not prosper through parsimony, but through bounty. Like the bounteous giver of all good, of whom they are the beloved sons, they delight in doing good. How stingy covetous professors can hope for salvation is a marvel to those who read such verses as this in the Bible. *And his seed is blessed.* God pays back with interest in the next generation. Where

the children of the righteous are not godly, there must be some reason for it in parental neglect, or *some* other guilty cause. The friend of the father is the friend of the family. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and of Jacob.

Verses 27-29. Here we have the seventh precept, which takes a negative and positive form, and is the quintessence of the entire Psalm

Verse 27. *Depart from evil, and do good.* We must not envy the doers of evil, but depart altogether from their spirit and example. As Lot left Sodom without casting a look behind, so must we leave sin. No truce or parley is to be held with sin, we must turn away from it without hesitation, and set ourselves practically to work in the opposite direction. He who neglects to do good will soon fall into evil. *And dwell for evermore.* Obtain an abiding and quiet inheritance. Short lived are the gains and pleasures of evil, but eternal are the rewards of grace.

Verse 28. *For the Lord loveth judgment.* The awarding of honour to whom honour is due is God's delight, especially when the upright man has been traduced by his fellow men. It must be a divine pleasure to right wrongs, and to defeat the machinations of the unjust. The great Arbiter of human destinies is sure to deal out righteous measure both to rich and poor, to good and evil, for such judgment is his delight. *And forsaketh not his saints.* This would not be right, and, therefore, shall never be done. God is as faithful to the objects of his love as he is just towards all mankind. *They are preserved for ever.* By covenant engagements their security is fixed, and by suretyship fulfilments that safety is accomplished; come what may, the saints are preserved in Christ Jesus, and because he lives, they shall live also. A king will not lose his jewels, nor will Jehovah

lose his people. As the manna in the golden pot, which else had melted, was preserved in the ark of the covenant beneath the mercyseat, so shall the faithful be preserved in the covenant by the power of Jesus their propitiation. *But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* Like the house of Jeroboam and Ahab, of which not a dog was left. Honour and wealth ill gotten seldom reach the third generation; the curse grows ripe before many years have passed, and falls upon the evil house. Among the legacies of wicked men the surest entail is a judgment on their family.

Verse 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land.* As heirs with Jesus Christ, the Canaan above, which is the antitype of "the land, " shall be theirs with all covenant blessing. *And dwell therein for ever.* Tenures differ, but none can match the holding which believers have of heaven. Paradise is theirs for ever by inheritance, and they shall live for ever to enjoy it. Who would not be a saint on such terms? Who would fret concerning the fleeting treasures of the godless?

Verse 30. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom.* Where the whole Psalm is dedicated to a description of the different fates of the just and the wicked, it was meet to give a test by which they could be known. A man's tongue is no ill index of his character. The mouth betrays the heart. Good men, as a rule, speak that which is to edifying, sound speech, religious conversation, consistent with the divine illumination which they have received. Righteousness is wisdom in action, hence all good men are practically wise men, and well may the speech be wise. *His tongue talketh of judgment.* He advocates justice, gives an honest verdict on things and men, and he foretells that God's judgments will come upon the wicked, as in the former days. His talk is neither foolish nor ribald, neither vapid nor

profane. Our conversation is of far more consequence than some men imagine.

Verse 31. *The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.* The best thing in the best place, producing the best results. Well might the man's talk be so admirable when his heart was so well stored. To love holiness, to have the motives and desires sanctified, to be in one's inmost nature obedient to the Lord—this is the surest method of making the whole run of our life efficient for its great ends, and even for securing the details of it, our *steps* from any serious mistake. To keep the even tenor of one's way, in such times as these, is given only to those whose hearts are sound towards God, who can, as in the text, call God their God. Policy slips and trips, it twists and tacks, and after all is worsted in the long run, but sincerity plods on its plain pathway and reaches the goal.

Verse 32. *The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.* If it were not for the laws of the land, we should soon see a massacre of the righteous. Jesus was watched by his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood: his disciples must not look for favour where their Master found hatred and death.

Verse 33. *The Lord will not leave him in his hand.* God often appears to deliver his servants, and when he does not do so in this life as to their bodies, he gives their souls such joy and peace that they triumphantly rise beyond their tormentors' power. We may be in the enemy's hand for awhile, as Job was, but we cannot be left there. *Nor condemn him when he is judged.* Time shall reverse the verdict of haste, or else eternity shall clear away the condemnation of time. In due season just men will be justified. Temporary injustices are tolerated, in the order of Providence, for purposes most wise; but the bitter shall not always be called sweet, nor light for ever be

traded as darkness; the right shall appear in due season; the fictitious and pretentious shall be unmasked, and the real and true shall be revealed. If we have done faithfully, we may appeal from the petty sessions of society to the solemn assize of the great day.

Verse 34. *Wait on the Lord.* We have here the eighth precept, and it is a lofty eminence to attain to. Tarry the Lord's leisure. Wait in obedience as a servant, in hope as an heir, in expectation as a believer. This little word "wait" is easy to say, but hard to carry out, yet faith must do it. *And keep his way.* Continue in the narrow path; let no haste for riches or ease cause unholy action. Let your motto be, "On, on, on." Never flag, or dream of turning aside. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." *And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land.* Thou shalt have all of earthly good which is really good, and of heavenly good there shall be no stint. Exaltation shall be the lot of the excellent. *When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.* A sight how terrible and how instructive! What a rebuke for fretfulness! what an incentive to gratitude! My soul, be still, as you foresee the end, the awful end of the Lord's enemies.

Verse 35. A second time David turns to his diary, and this time in poetic imagery tells us of what he had observed. It were well if we too took notes of divine providences. *I have seen the wicked in great power.* The man was terrible to others, ruling with much authority, and carrying things with a high hand, a Caesar in might, a Croesus in wealth. *And spreading himself like a green bay tree.* Adding house to house and field to field, rising higher and higher in the state. He seemed to be ever verdant like a laurel, he grew as a tree in its own native soil, from which it had never been transplanted. No particular tree is here meant, a spreading beech or a wide expanding oak may serve us to realize the picture; it is a thing of earth, whose roots are in the clay; its honours are fading leaves; and though its shadow

dwarfs the plants which are condemned to pine beneath it, yet it is itself a dying thing as the feller's axe shall prove. In the noble tree, which claims to be king of the forest, behold the grandeur of the ungodly today; wait awhile and wonder at the change, as the timber is carried away, and the very root torn from the ground.

Verse 36. *Yet he passed away.* Tree and man both gone, the son of man as surely as the child of the forest. What clean sweeps death makes! *And, lo, he was not.* To the surprise of all men the great man was gone, his estates sold, his business bankrupt, his house alienated, his name forgotten, and all in a few months. *Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.* Moved by curiosity, if we enquire for the ungodly, they have left no trace; like birds of ill omen none desire to remember them. Some of the humblest of the godly are immortalized, their names are imperishably fragrant in the church, while of the ablest of infidels and blasphemers hardly their names are remembered beyond a few years. Men who were in everybody's mouths but yesterday are forgotten tomorrow, for only virtue is immortal.

Verse 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright.* After having watched with surprise the downfall of the wicked, give your attention to the sincerely godly man, and observe the blessed contrast. Good men are men of mark, and are worth our study. Upright men are marvels of grace, and worth beholding. *For the end of that man is peace.* The man of peace has an end of peace. Peace without end comes in the end to the man of God. His way may be rough, but it leads home. With believers it may rain in the morning, thunder at midday, and pour in torrents in the afternoon, but it must clear up ere the sun goes down. War may last till our last hour, but then we shall hear the last of it.

Verse 38. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together.* A common ruin awaits those who are joined in common rebellion. *The end of the wicked shall be cut off.* Their time shall be shortened, their happiness shall be ended, their hopes for ever blasted, their execution hastened on. Their present is shortened by their sins; they shall not live out half their days. They have no future worth having, while the righteous count their future as their true heritage.

Verse 39. *But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.* Sound doctrine this. The very marrow of the gospel of free grace. By salvation is meant deliverance of every kind; not only *the* salvation which finally lands us in glory, but all the minor rescues of the way; these are all to be ascribed unto the Lord, and to him alone. Let him have glory from those to whom he grants salvation. *He is their strength in the time of trouble.* While trouble overthrows the wicked, it only drives the righteous to their strong Helper, who rejoices to uphold them.

Verse 40. *And the Lord shall help them.* In all future time Jehovah will stand up for his chosen. Our Great Ally will bring up his forces in the heat of the battle. *He shall deliver them from the wicked.* As he rescued Daniel from the lions, so will he preserve his beloved from their enemies; they need not therefore fret, nor be discouraged. *And save them, because they trust in him.* Faith shall ensure their safety of the elect. It is the mark of the sheep by which they shall be separated from the goats. Not their merit, but their believing, shall distinguish them. Who would not try the walk of faith? Whoever truly believes in God will be no longer fretful against the apparent irregularities of this present life, but will rest assured that what is mysterious is nevertheless just, and what seems hard, is, beyond a doubt, ordered in mercy. So the Psalm ends with a note which is the death knell of the unhallowed disquietude with which the Psalm

commenced. Happy they who can thus sing themselves out of ill frames into gracious conditions.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The righteous are preserved in Christ with a special preservation, and in a peculiar safety. In the thirty-seventh Psalm this point is excellently and largely handled, both by direct proof, and by answer to all the usual objections against their safety. That they shall be preserved is affirmed, Ps 37:3,17,23,25,32. The objections answered are many.

Objection 1. Wicked men flourish. *Solution.* A righteous man should never grieve at that, for "they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Ps 37:2.

Objection 2. Righteous men are in distress. *Solution*—Ps 37:6. The night of their adversity will be turned into the light of prosperity; and as surely as they can believe when it is night that it shall be day, so surely may they be persuaded when crosses are upon them, that comfort and deliverance shall come.

Objection 3. But there are great plots laid against the righteous, and they are pursued with great malice, and their intended ruin is come almost to the very issue. *Solution*—Ps 37:12-15. The Lord sees all the plots of wicked men, and laughs at their spiteful and foolish malice; while they are busy to destroy the righteous, and hope to have a day against them, "The Lord seeth that their own day is coming upon them, even a day of destruction, a day of great judgment and eternal

misery; "their bow shall be broken, and the sword that they have drawn shall enter into their own heart.

Objection 4. But the just have but small means. *Solution*—Ps 37:16-17. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the Lord upholdeth the righteous."

Objection 5. Heavy times are like to befall them. *Solution*—Ps 37:19. "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall have enough."

Objection 6. But the wicked wax fatter and fatter, and they prevail in vexing the righteous. *Solution*—Ps 37:20. Indeed the wicked are fat, but it is but "the fat of lambs, "their prosperity shall soon melt; and as they be like smoke in vexing the godly, so shall they be like smoke in vanishing away.

Objection 7. But the righteous do fall. *Solution*—Ps 37:24. Though he do fall, yet he falls not finally, nor totally, for he "is not utterly cast down; "and besides, there is an upholding providence of God in all the falls of the righteous.

Objection 8. We see some wicked men that do not so fall into adversity, but rather are in prosperity to their dying days. *Solution*—Ps 37:28. Though they do, yet, "their seed shall be cut off."

Objection 9. But some wicked men are strong yet, and in their seed spread also. *Solution*—Ps 37:35-36. Note also that these "spreading bay trees" many times "soon pass away; "and they and their houses are sometimes "utterly cut off."

Objection 10. But upright men are under many and long crosses. *Solution*—Ps 37:37. Yet "his end is peace."

Objection 11. But nobody stands for the godly when they come into question. *Solution*—Ps 37:39-40. "Their salvation is of the Lord; "he is their strength, he will help them and deliver them, etc.

But if we would be thus delivered, observe: 1. That we must not unthankfully fret at God's providence Ps 37:1. 2. We must "trust in the Lord and do good" Ps 37:3. 3. We must "delight ourselves in the Lord, "and not place our contentment on earthly things Ps 37:4. 4. We must "commit our ways to God" Ps 37:5. 5. We must get patience and humble affections Ps 37:7-11. 6. We must be of upright conversation Ps 37:14. 7. We must be merciful Ps 37:25-26. 8. We must "speak righteous things, "and get "the law into our hearts" Ps 37:30-31. 9. We must "keep our way, "and "wait on God" and not use ill means. *Nicolas Byfield*.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm may well be styled, The good man's cordial in bad times; a sovereign plaister for the plague of discontent; or, a choice antidote against the poison of impatience. *Nathaniel Hardy, in a Funeral Sermon, 1649.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm very much reminds one in its construction of the sententious and pithy conciseness of the Book of Proverbs. It does not contain any prayer, nor any direct allusion to David's own circumstances of persecution or distress. It is rather the utterance of sound practical wisdom and godliness from the lips of experience and age, such as we might suppose an elder of the church, or a father of a family, to let fall as he sat with his household gathered around him, and listening to his earnest and affectionate admonitions. *Barton Bouchier*.

Whole Psalm. The present Psalm is one of the alphabetical Psalms, it is called "*Providentiae speculum*," by Tertullian; "*Potio contra murmur*," by Isidore; "*Vestis piorum*," by Luther. *Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 1. *Fret*, or, inflame not, burn not thyself with anger or grief. *John Diodati*.

Verse 1. *Neither be thou envious*, etc. Queen Elizabeth envied the milkmaid when she was in prison; but if she had known what a glorious reign she should have had afterwards for forty-four years, she would not have envied her. And as little needeth a godly man, though in misery, to envy a wicked man in the ruff of all his prosperity and jollity, considering what he hath in hand, much more what he hath in hope. *John Trapp*.

Verse 1. Would it not be accounted folly in a man that is heir to many thousands per annum that he should envy a stage player, clothed in the habit of a king, and yet not heir to one foot of land? who, though he have the form, respect, and apparel of a king or nobleman, yet he is, at the same time, a very beggar, and worth nothing? Thus, wicked men, though they are arrayed gorgeously, and fare deliciously, wanting nothing, and having more that heart can wish, yet they are but only possessors: the godly Christian is the heir. What good doth all their prosperity do them? It does but hasten their ruin, not their reward. The ox that is the labouring ox is the longer lived than the ox that is in the pasture; the very putting of him there doth but hasten his slaughter; and when God puts the wicked men into fat pastures, into places of honour and power, it is but to hasten their ruin. Let no man, therefore, fret himself because of evil doers, nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked; for the candle of the wicked shall be put into everlasting darkness; they shall soon be cut

off, and wither as a green herb. *Ludovic de Carbone, quoted by John Spencer.*

Verse 2. *Cut down like the grass, with a scythe, and even at one blow. Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 2. *Wither.* O bitter word, which will make the ears of them that hear it to tingle! O sentence intolerable, which deprives sinners of all good things, and bringeth them to all woe! The Lord sometime accursed the fig tree, and immediately, not only the leaves, but also the body and root were wholly withered: even so, that fearful curse of the last day shall be no less effectual; for on whomsoever it falleth is shall so scorch them, and shall so make them destitute of God's grace, that they shall never more be able to do, to speak, think, or to hope for any good thing. *Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 2. *Green herb.* We cannot gather riper fruit of patience from any tree than is found upon the low shrubs of man's short life; for if that fretting canker of *envy at the prosperity of the wicked* have overrun thy mind, a malady from which the saints have no shelter to be freed, out of this apothecary's shop take antidote; either thy time is short to behold it, or theirs shorter to enjoy is; "they are set in slippery places, and are suddenly destroyed, "Ps 73:18; "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave, " Job 21:13; *They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Edmund Layfield's Sermon, entitled "The Mapped of Man's Mortality and Vanity", 1630.*

Verse 2. Sometimes the wicked, like the green herb, wither in their spring, they fall in their rise, they perish in the beginnings of their mischievous designs; but if they do come to a full growth, they grow but to harvest, the fit season of their cutting off. *Robert Mossom.*

Verse 3. Note well the double precept *trust* and *do*. This is the true order, the two must go together, the one produces, the other proves; the promise is to both. *C. H. S.*

Verse 3. *So shall thou dwell in the land*, etc. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance: *Verily thou shalt be fed*; some read it, Thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding upon the promises. *Verily thou shalt be fed*, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee. God himself is a shepherd, a feeder to all those that trust in him, Ps 23:1. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3. *So shalt thou dwell in the land*, etc. The land of Canaan was considered as the sum of earthly, and the type of heavenly felicity: to be provided for in the Lord's land, and there to dwell under his protection, near his ordinances, and among his people, was all that the genuine Israelite could desire. *Thomas Scott* (1744-1821) *in loc.*

Verse 3. *Thou shalt be fed.* A manner of speech taken from cattle feeding securely, under the conduct and keeping of a good shepherd. *Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 3. *Thou shalt be fed.* Fed in plenty. *Thomas Secker* (Archbishop), 1768.

Verse 3. Fed in security. *John Parkhurst.*

Verse 4. Note thy part and God's part. Do thou *delight*, and he will *give*. *C. H. S.*

Verse 4. How much grace and love breathes in these words, *Delight thyself also in the Lord!* Trust in him was recommended before, and

now, this being added also, how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, *he delights in you*; I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, "His delights were with the sons of men, "Pr 8:31. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you—his friends, his sons, those of his own house? Think what life and vigour it will infuse into you, and that "the joy of the Lord will be your strength, "Ne 8:10. How pleasantly will you hold on your course, and discharge all the other duties of this your present state? You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it then to take delight in him whom I must serve; which only makes that service acceptable to him, and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of; a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder you delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God that never wronged you, and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good will! And consider that your condition on earth is such as exposes you to many sufferings and hardships, which, by your not delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid (for they are things common to men), but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before! And how dreadful to appear before him to whom your own heart shall

accuse you to have been (against all his importunities and allurements) a disaffected stranger! *John Howe's "Treatise of Delight in God."*

Verse 4. We have in the former part extended the meaning of the words *Delight thyself in the Lord*, beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify; so as not to understand them merely as requiring that very single act of *delight* to be immediately and directly terminated on God himself; but to take them as comprehending all *the sum of all holy and religious converse with God, i.e.*, as it is delightful, or as it is seasoned (intermingled, and as it were besprinkled) with delight; and upon the same account, of all out other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion. And I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text (as may be alleged for further justification hereof) is most fitly capable. For the particle which we read *in* the Lord, hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with*, or *by*, or *besides*, or *before*, or *in presence of*, as if it had been said, "Come and sit down with God, retire thyself to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight." As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend that puts himself under his roof, and, besides personal converse with himself, freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accommodations, and provisions which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well governed house. *John Howe.*

Verse 4. *He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* It shall be unto thee even as thou wilt. It is said of Luther that he could have

what he would of Almighty God. What may not a favourite, who hath the royalty of his prince's care, obtain of him? *John Trapp*.

Verse 4. *The desires of thine heart.* All the desires of this spiritual seed are of the nature of this seed, namely, substantial, and shall meet with substance. All the desires of natural man, even after God, after Christ, after righteousness, shall burn and perish with him (for they are not the truth, nor do they come from the truth, nor can they reach to the truth;) but all the desires of this spirit shall live with the Spirit of God, in rest and satisfaction for ever. *John Pennington, 1656.*

Verse 4. The *desires* of God, and the *desires* of the righteous, agree in one; they are of one mind in their desires. *John Bunyan.*

Verse 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord,* etc. When we bear the burden of our own affairs ourselves, and are chastised with anxiety and want of success, and with envying the ungodly who prosper better than we do, the best remedy is first to do our duty, as we are enabled in the use of the means, then cast the care of the success over on God, as the ploughman doth when he hath harrowed his land; and let the burden of it rest on God, and let us not take it off him again, but put our mind to rest, resolved to take the harvest in good part, as he shall send it. *David Dickson.*

Verse 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord,* is rendered by the Vulgate, *Revela viam Domino,* reveal thy way; and by St. Ambrose, understood of revealing our sins to God. Indeed, since it is impossible to cover, why should we not discover our sins? Conceal not that which God knoweth already, and would have thee to make known. It is a very ill office to be the devil's secretary. Oh, break thy league with Satan be revealing his secrets, thy sins, to God. *Nathaniel Hardy.*

Verse 5. *Commit thy way unto.* Margin and Hebrew, *Roll thy way upon*—as one who lays upon the shoulder of one stronger than himself a burden which he is not able to bear. *William De Burgh, D.D., in "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Dublin:" 1860.*

Verse 5. Note the double again, *Commit* and *trust*. *C. H. S.*

Verse 5. *He shall bring it to pass.* When a hard piece of work is put into the hand of an apprentice for the first assay of his skill, the beholders are justly afraid of a miscarriage in his young and inexperienced hand; but when the worker is an old master of craft, none are afraid but his cunning hand can act again what so oft it hath wrought to the contentment of all the beholders. Were our God a novice in the great art of governing the world, and of the church in the bosom thereof; had he to this day never given any proof of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, in turning about the most terrible accidents to the welfare and joy of his saints; we might indeed be amazed whenever we feel ourselves sinking in the dangers wherein the practices of our enemies oft do plunge us over head and ears; but the Lord having given in times past so many documents of his uncontroverted skill and most certain will to bring about all human affairs, as to his own glory, so to the real good of all that love him, it would be in us an impious and unexcusable uncharitableness to suspect the end of any work which he hath begun. *Robert Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons, 1643.*

Verses 5, 7.

To God thy way commending,
Trust him whose arm of might,
The heavenly circles bending,
Guides every star aright:
The winds, and clouds, and lightning,

By his sure hand are led;
And he will dark shades brightening.

Show thee what path to tread.
Although to make God falter,
The powers of hell combine,
One jot they cannot alter
Of his all wise design:
All projects and volition
Of his eternal mind,
Despite all opposition,
Their due fulfilment find.

No more, then, droop and languish,
Thou sorrow stricken soul;
Even from the depths of anguish,
Whose billows over thee roll,
Thy Father's hand shall draw thee:
In hope and patience stay,
And joy will soon shed over thee
An ever brightening ray.

All faithless murmurs leaving,
Bid them a last good night,
No more thy vexed soul grieving,
Because things seem not right;
Wisely his sceptre wielding,
God sits in regal state,
No power to mortals yielding,
Events to regulate.

Trust with a faith untiring
In thine Omniscient King,

And thou shalt see admiring
What he to light will bring.
Of all thy griefs, the reason
Shall at the last appear:
Why now denied a season,
Will shine in letters clear.

Then raise thine eyes to heaven,
Thou who canst trust his frown;
Thence shall thy meed be given,
The chaplet and the crown:
Thy God the palm victorious
In thy right hand shall plant,
Whilst thou, in accents glorious,
Melodious hymns shall chant.

—Paul Gerhard (1606-1676), *translated by Frances Elizabeth Cox, in "Hymns from the German,"* 1864.

Verse 6. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, etc.* If thou shouldst be accused as a man of evil designs, let not that trouble thee neither: for though thy fame may be obscured for a time by calumnies and slanders, as the sun is by mists and clouds, yet as that scatters them all at last, so shall thy integrity appear, and shine as bright as the sun at noonday. *Symon Patrick.*

Verse 7. *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.* There are two words in the original, which express the privilege and the duty of resting on Christ: one implies such a state of acquiescence, as silences the clamours of conscience, and composes the perturbation of the spirit; the other signifies the refreshment and repose of a weary pilgrim, when he arrives at the end of his journey, and is

settled for life in a secure, commodious, plentiful habitation. *James Hervey*.

Verse 7. *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.* Take the case of one who, with a load above his strength, has been toiling some steep and broken path, when suddenly he finds it lifted off and transferred to another whose strength he knows to be more than equal to the task, and in whose sympathy he can securely trust. What would his feeling be but one of perfect rest, and calm reliance, and joyous freedom, as they went on their way together? And such is the blessedness of rolling our care upon the Lord—in weakness we are resting on superior strength, in perplexity and doubt we are resting on superior wisdom, in all times of trial and hard service we can stay ourselves on the assurance of his perfect sympathy. The literal meaning of the word *rest*, is *be silent* towards the Lord. With the eye fixed on him let all unbelieving thoughts be stilled, such thoughts as rise and rankle in the querulous spirit when it sees only its troubles, and not God in them, when the mists of earth hide from its sight the eternal stars of heaven. Then like Jacob, it may say morosely, "All these things are against me; "or, like Elijah, despondently, "It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life; "or, like Jonah, fretfully, "I do well to be angry." In regard to all such dark and unbelieving suggestions, the heart is to keep silence, to be still and know that he is God; silent as to murmuring, but not silent as to prayer, for in that holy meditative stillness the heart turns to commune with him. What is "resting in God, "but the instinctive movement and upward glance of the spirit to him; the confiding all one's griefs and fears to him, and feeling strengthened, patient, hopeful in the act of doing so! It implies a willingness that he should choose for us, a conviction that the ordering of all that concerns us is safer in his hands than in our own.

A few practical remarks: 1. Our "*resting patiently*" in the Lord applies only to the trials which he sends, not to the troubles which even Christians often make for themselves. There is a difference in the burdens that come in the way of duty, and those that come through our wandering into other ways. We can roll the one upon the Lord, but with the other our punishment may be to be left to bear them long, and to be bruised in bearing them. 2. The duty here enjoined is to be carried through all our life. We all admit that *patient* waiting is needed for the great trials of life, but may not acknowledge so readily that it is needed as much for little, daily, commonplace vexations. But these are as much a test of Christian principle as the other. 3. This resting in God is a criterion of a man's spiritual state. It needs a special faculty of discernment, a new sense to be opened in the soul, before our fallen nature can understand or desire it. *James D. Burns, M.A.*

Verse 7. (*first clause*). *Hold thee still* (so it may be translated). And this is the hardest precept that is given to man; insomuch that the most difficult precept of action sinks into nothing when compared with this command to inaction. *Jerome.*

Verse 7. (*first clause*). The Hebrew word rendered *silent* is (*owr*), *dom*, from which the English word *dumb* appears to be derived. The silence here enjoined is opposed to murmuring or complaining. *James Anderson, in Calvin's Commentary.*

Verse 7. Note again the twin duties, *rest* and *wait*.

Verse 7. *Bringeth wicked devices to pass.* Observe the opposition between this and *God's* bringing to pass, in verse five. The ground for grief is that the ungodly appear to achieve their end, the reason for comfort is that our end shall be achieved also, and that in the best manner by God himself. *C. H. S.*

Verse 8. *Forsake wrath;* which is anger wrought up to a greater degree; and the rather to be shunned and avoided, as being very disagreeable to the character of a good man. *Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil;* evil may be done by fretting at the prosperity of wicked men, or by imitating them, doing as they do, in hope of being prosperous as they are. *John Gill.*

Verse 9. *They shall inherit the earth.* He means that they shall live in such a manner as that the blessing of God shall follow them, even to the grave. *John Calvin.*

Verse 10. *Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* To wit, because he shall be grubbed up by the roots. *Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 10. *His place...shall not be.* The very land he occupied as a home, and the title to which was unimpeachable, is no longer *his place.* It has passed into other hands. Nothing of all he had on earth is his. He is as poor as the most miserable object that subsisted on alms. *William S. Plumer.*

Verse 10. The peacock, a glorious fowl, when he beholds that comely fan and circle which he maketh of the beautiful feathers of his tail, he rejoiceth, he setteth, and beholdeth every part thereof: but when he looketh on his feet, which he perceiveth to be black and foul, he by and by, with great misliking, vails his top gallant, and seemeth to sorrow. In like manner, a great many know by experience, that when they see themselves to abound in riches and honours, they glory and are deeply conceited of themselves; they praise their fortune, and admire themselves; they make plots, and appoint much for themselves to perform in many years to come. This year, they say, we will bear this office, and the next year that; afterward we shall have the rule of such a province; then we will build a palace in such a

city, whereunto we will adjoin such gardens of pleasure, and such vineyards: and thus they make a very large reckoning aforehand, who if they did but once behold their feet, if they did but think upon the shortness of their life, so transitory and inconstant; how soon would they let fall their proud feathers, forsake their arrogancy, and change their purpose, their minds, their lives, and their manners. *Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 11. *The meek shall inherit the earth.* In the meantime, they, and they only, possess the present earth, as they go toward the kingdom of heaven, by being humble, and cheerful, and content with what their good God has allotted them. They have no turbulent, repining, vexatious thoughts that they deserve better; nor are vexed when they see others possessed of more honour, or more riches, than their wise God has allotted for their share. But they possess what they have with a meek and contented quietness; such a quietness as makes their very dreams pleasing, both to God and themselves. *Isaak Walton (1593-1683), in "The Complete Angler."*

Verse 11. *The meek.* What is thy Beloved more than any other beloved? It is spoken to the spouse. So what is meekness more than any other virtues? We may say, here is *synecdoche speciei*, one particular taken for the general, one virtue for all the rest. Or the effect is put for the cause; because meekness is one of the principal and chiefest parts of holiness. But if you will give me leave to conjecture, the Holy Ghost may seem in this promise at once to show the condition of the church, and to comfort her; and because being laid hard at on every side, she stands in need of this virtue more than any other, to fit and fashion the reward to the virtue, to cherish and exalt it in us with the promise of something beyond our expectation, even the *inheritance of the earth*. And indeed what fitter reward can there be of meekness? What more fit and just than that they who

have been made the anvil for injuries to beat on, who have been *virī perpressitī*, as Seneca speaks of Socrates, men of great sufferance, who have suffered not only their goods to be torn from them by oppression and wrong, but their reputations to be wounded with the sharp razor of detraction, and have withstood the shock of all *spectantibus similes*, with the patience of a looker on, should be raised and comforted with a promise of that which their meekness gave up to the spoil; and that by the providence of God which loves to thwart the practice of the world, they should be made heirs even of those possessions which the hand of violence hath snatched from them. *Anthony Farindon, B.D., 1596-1658.*

Verse 11. Not the hot stirring spirits who bustle for the world shall have it, but the meek, who are thrust up and down from corner to corner, and hardly suffered to remain anywhere quietly in it. This earth, which they seem most deprived of, they only shall have and enjoy. When the Lord hath made it worth the having, then none shall have it but they. *They shall inherit the earth.* The earth is the Lord's; these are the children of the Lord, and they shall inherit this earth. When the Lord taketh it into his own possession and enjoyment, they shall succeed him in the possession and enjoyment of it. It is their right, and shall descend unto them by right, by inheritance. It is the Lord's right, and by the Lord shall descend to them as their right. They cannot yet have it, for the Lord hath it not yet; but when the Lord hath it, it shall fairly descend to them. This accursed earth they shall never have, but when it is taken into the hands of the Lord, and blessed by the Lord, then it shall be theirs, then it shall be inherited by the children of blessing. *John Pennington.*

Verse 11. *And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.* Surely when the glory of the Lord covers the earth, and all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Prince of Peace,

and the wicked one is rooted out, we may well expect peace in rich abundance. *W. Wilson.*

Verses 12-13. Note how the gesture of the wicked in *gnashing their teeth* is returned to them in the Lord's scornful *laughter* at their devices. Their plotting, too, is countermined by that winding up of all plots, which the Lord knoweth, though they are wilfully ignorant of it. *C. H. S.*

Verse 13. *The Lord shall laugh at him*, etc. He seems to provide very coldly for our consolation under sorrow, for he represents God as merely *laughing*. But if God values highly our salvation, why does he not set himself to resist the fury of our enemies, and vigorously oppose them? We know that this, as has been said in Ps 2:4, is a proper trial of our patience when God does not come forth at once, armed for the discomfiture of the ungodly, but connives for a time, and withholds his hand. Lest the flesh should still murmur and complain, demanding why God should only laugh at the wicked, and not rather take vengeance upon them, the reason is added, that he sees the day of their destruction at hand. *For he seeth that his day is coming.* *John Calvin.*

Verse 13. *For he seeth that his day is coming.* He laughs at such poor worms, who make themselves so great upon the earth, and act so loftily in their impotence, seeing it must so soon be over with them. *Berleb. Bible, quoted by E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 13. *For he seeth that his day is coming.* His dismal day, his death's day, which will also be his doom's day. *John Trapp.*

Verses 14-15. The tongue is a *sword* and a *bow*, which shooteth its arrows, even bitter words, against the humble and upright, Jesus and his disciples. But these are not the only weapons that have been

drawn against them. How the malice of the Jews returned upon their own heads no one is ignorant, though few lay it to heart, and consider them as set forth for an example. *George Horne*.

Verses 14-15. When the wicked are most near to do a mischief to the Lord's people, then is a mischief most near unto them. *David Dickson*.

Verse 16. *A little that a righteous man hath*, etc. To wit, 1. Because the wicked do often enrich themselves by unjust means, and so have much vexation and trouble with them, and likewise thereby do treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; whereas the righteous with a little, well gotten, have much peace of conscience, with hope of heaven hereafter. 2. Because the righteous use theirs well, and are the better for them; whereas the wicked abuse theirs many ways, and are in many respects the worse for them. 3. Because the righteous enjoy what they have from hand to mouth as the gifts of God, and the pledges of his fatherly love and care over them, and so it is to them as manna from heaven, and hereby they enjoy much sweet comfort, and are fully satisfied with what they have; whereas the wicked have none of this joy nor satisfaction by their wealth. 4. Because God by his blessing doth usually make that the righteous enjoy to be more effectual for their good than is the abundance of the wicked. A little coarse fare makes them more healthful and strong than the wicked are with all their plenty. And, 5. Because the wicked enjoys not his wealth long, as the righteous man doth; and this indeed agrees best with the following words. *Arthur Jackson*.

Verse 16. Strangers to Christ have the use of outward mercies, but cannot be properly said to have the enjoyment; they seem to be masters of them, but indeed they are servants to them; possessors as to outward use, but slaves as to their inward affections; they serve

them while they seem to dispose of them; they do not *dominari*, but *servire*—have not the command of, but are enslaved. Nor is their use truly comfortable; they may fancy comfort, but their comfort is but a fancy; it flows from another fountain than can be digged in earth; true, solid comfort is the portion of those only who have the righteousness of Christ for their portion. These may look upon every temporal enjoyment as a token of everlasting love, as a pledge and earnest of eternal glory; and both these, because they may receive them as the purchase of the blood and righteousness of Christ; aye, here is the well spring of comfort, the fountain of that comfort which is better than life. Oh, what comfort is it to taste the sweetness of Christ's love in every enjoyment! When we can say, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me, that I might enjoy these blessings, "oh, how will this raise the value of every common mercy! Christ's righteousness which was performed, the highest expression of his love, purchased this for me! Upon this account is that of the psalmist true, *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked*. He that hath but food and raiment hath in this respect more than he that hath the Turkish empire, or the gold of the Indies. He hath more ground of comfort in his little than they in all. *David Clarkson*.

Verse 16. If thine estate were but little, yet it would be perfumed with love, and that lump of sugar in thy cup would make the liquor sweet, be it never so small. As the waters which flow from the hills of some of the islands of Molucca taste of the cinnamon and cloves which grow there, so should thy gift, though it were but water, taste of the goodwill and special grace of the Giver. Thy *little*, with the fear of the Lord, would be *better than the riches of many wicked men*. As a little ring with a very costly diamond in it is far more worth than many great ones without it, so thy estate, though it were but a penny, should be joined with the precious jewel of that love which is better

than life, and enjoyed by special promise, and thereby be infinitely more worth than the thousands and millions of others bestowed merely from common bounty, and enjoyed only by a general providence. *George Swinnock.*

Verse 16. It is as possible for a wicked man to fill his body with air and his chest with grace, as his mind with wealth. It is with them as with a ship; it may be overladen with silver and gold, even unto sinking, and yet have compass and sides to hold ten times more. So here, a covetous wretch, though he have enough to sink him, yet he shall never have enough to satisfy him. So that the conclusion which the psalmist delivers is most worthy to be observed: *A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked;* he doth not say of how many, because let us think of never so many, yea, all of them, the righteous man's little is better in very many respects than all their greatest treasures heaped together. The King of Spain although the greatest prince in Christendom by far, having his empire so far extended, that he may truly say, that the sun ever shines upon his dominions, yet gives this for his motto, *Totus non sufficit orbis*, The whole world is not sufficient. God by Solomon tells us that "In the house of the righteous is much treasure" Pr 15:6, although many times there is scarce a good bed to lie, or a seat to sit on. The time will certainly come, when the richest wicked men that ever lived will see clearly that their account would have been much narrower, and consequently their condition to all eternity less miserable, if they had been so poor as to have begged their bread from door to door all their lives long. It is with the blessings of this life as it is with perfumed gloves; when they are richly perfumed their perfume is much more valuable than the leather of which they are made: so, not so much earthly blessings considered in themselves, as their being perfumed with the sweet love of God in Christ, is that which maketh them blessings indeed, truly deserving the name they

bear. Now all the blessings of those who have made Mary's choice are all thus perfumed; all the barley bread they eat, be it never so coarse; all the clothes they wear, be they never so mean; with all their other temporal blessings, they proceed from the same sweet love of God, wherewith he was moved to bestow Jesus Christ upon them for salvation. Ro 8:32. *John Glascock's Sermon, entitled "Mary's Choice,"* 1659.

Verses 16-17. A little blest is better than a great deal curst; a little blest is better than a world enjoyed; a pound blest is better than a thousand curst; a black crust blest is better than a feast curst; the gleanings blest are better than the whole harvest curst; a drop of mercy blest is better than a sea of mercy curst; Lazarus crumbs blest was better than Dives' delicates curst; Jacob's little blest unto him was better than Esau's great estate that was curst unto him. It is always better to have scraps with a blessing, than to have manna and quails with a curse; a thin table with a blessing is better than a full table with a snare; a threadbare coat with a blessing is better than a purple robe curst; a hole, a cave, a den, a barn, a chimney corner with a blessing, is better than stately palaces with a curse; a woollen cap blest is better than a golden crown curst; and it may be that emperor understood as much, that said of his crown, when he looked on it with tears: "If you knew the cares that are under this crown you would never stoop to take it up." And therefore, why should not a Christian be contented with a little, seeing his little shall be blest unto him? Isaac tills the ground and sows his seed, and God blesses him with an hundredfold; and Cain tills the ground and sows his seed, but the earth is cursed to him and commanded not to yield to him his strength. Oh, therefore never let a Christian murmur because he hath but little, but rather let him be still blessing of that God that hath blest his little, and doth bless his little, and that will bless his little to him. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but he upholdeth (or underprops) the righteous.* By the arms of the wicked, you are to understand their strength, their valour, their power, their wit, their wealth, their abundance, which is all the arms they have to support and bear up themselves in the world with. Now, these arms shall be broken, and when they are broken, then, even then, will God uphold the righteous, that is, God will be a continual overflowing fountain of good to his righteous ones; so that they shall never want, though all the springs of the wicked are dried up round about them. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright.* Deposits their days, lays them up in safety for them: for such is the original idea of (edy). *John Fry.*

Verse 18. *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright,* and they cannot be cut short by the malice of man. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 20. *As the fat of lambs.* As the glory of fat sheep, which are at length slain. *Targum.*

Verse 20. *Fat of lambs.* As the fat of the sacrifices was consumed on the altar by the fire (which was a type of God's righteous vengeance upon sinners), till it vanished into smoke; so the wicked will be the sacrifices to God's justice, and be destroyed by the fire of his indignation. *Thomas Scott.*

Verse 20. *Into smoke shall they consume.* "What hath pride profited us? or what hath our boasting of riches given us?" Such are the things, they shall speak who are in hell and who have sinned. For, the hope of the ungodly is like a dry thistle down, by the wind carried away, or the thin foam spread upon the billows, or as a smoke floated

hither and thither by the wind, or as the remembrance of a wayfaring man for a day. *Wouter of Stoelwyk*, 1541.

Verse 21. *Payeth not again;* i.e., has it not in his power, from his straitened circumstances, to repay what he has borrowed: compare De 28:12. A Jew thus circumstanced became the bond slave of his creditors: compare 2Ki 4:1. *Daniel Cresswell*.

Verse 22. God promises that the seed of his people shall inherit the earth. The child of such a tenant as paid his rent well, shall not be put out of his farm. *John Glascock*.

Verse 23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* When this Pilot undertakes to steer their course, their vessel shall never split upon the rock, run upon the sands, or spring a leak, so as to sink in the seas. To be sure he will see them safe in their harbour. He was no Christian, yet I suppose none will deny but he spake good divinity, who said, "If a man will choose God for his Friend, he shall travel securely through a wilderness that hath many beasts of prey in it; he shall pass safely through this world; for he only is safe that hath God for his guide." (Ar. Epist. 27) Doth he not speak a little like David himself Ps 37:23, who never expected to come to glory except he were guided by his counsel? Now, if a poor heathen could say thus, and see good reason to trust God, and admire his faithfulness as he doth frequently (and so doth Seneca, justifying God's faithfulness in all his dealings with the best men in all their sufferings, and the prosperity of the wicked); what then shall the heavenly Christian say, who hath experienced so much of God's faithfulness in answering his prayers, in fulfilling his promises, and supplying all his exigencies? *James Janeway*.

Verse 23. *He delighteth in his way.* Note that in verse four, we are bidden to delight in the Lord, and here he delights in us, and as here

our way is his delight, so in verse thirty-four we are to "keep *his way*." These antitheses are instructive. *C. H. S.*

Verses 23-24. Strange words to us! the very *steps all ordered*, and that by an Almighty One, who "delights" in the goodness of the good man's way. And yet the inference so distinctly to be drawn is that the good man *may* fall, and that his God and Guide may stand by and behold and permit! Let us add to the suggestion of these verses, one or two references which may help us to establish the principle in our hearts, that the child of God may fall and still remain the child of God; and also to explain somewhat of the reason why this is part of their lot, whether ordered, or only permitted, at all events, a step of the "right way, "by which God leads them to a "city of habitation." Ps 107:7. It is observed near the close of Hezekiah's good and prosperous life that, "in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon...God left him *to try him*, that he might know all that was in his heart, " 2Ch 32:31. And again, in Daniel's prophecy regarding the latter days, we find Da 11:35, "And some of them of understanding shall fall, *to try them*, and *to purge*, and *make them white*." In the two preceding verses, we have also some valuable details regarding such falls, such as the help with which God will uphold them, the flatteries with which the world will still beset, and hinder them from rising again; the outward troubles into which their fall shall lead them, as through a furnace; the high position (instructors of many) which yet shall not save them from their needed ordeal—the time appointed—and the end in view. So here. The acknowledgment of the possibility of the good man's fall is accompanied with the precious assurance that *he shall not be utterly cast down*. *Mary B. M. Duncan, in "Under the Shadow, 1867."*

Verse 24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down*, etc. Thus the Spirit comforts and answers the secret thoughts which

everyone might have, saying with himself, I have, however, seen it happen, that the righteous is oppressed, and his cause is trodden in the dust by the wicked. Nay, he replies, dear child, let it be so, that he falls; he still cannot remain lying thus and be cast away; he must be up again, although all the world doubts of it. For God catches him by the hand, and raises him again. *Martin Luther.*

Verse 24. *Though he fall*, namely, as one that were faint hearted, *he shall not be cast off*, namely, utterly, or for ever from God 2Co 4:9; *"for the Lord putteth under his hand,* "i.e., his power and might, namely, to uphold him from utter falling away, which we should quickly do if God were not with us. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

Verse 24. A man pardoned, and justified by faith in Christ, though he may, and sometimes doth, fall into foul sins, yet they never prevail so far as to reverse pardon, and reduce to a state of non-justification. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand!* He speaks of a good man pardoned, justified; he may fall; but how far? from pardon, from justification? No, then he should utterly fall, be cast down beneath God's hand; but the text saith, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand; or, as Montanus renders the words, the Lord upholdeth his hands, and he will not let him sink into such a condition. If it were so, then sin should have dominion over him, but, Ro 6:14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; "and Ro 8:2, justified ones are freed from the law of sin and death; and Ro 8:30, the predestinated, called, justified, and glorified ones, are so linked together, that there is no breaking their chain; if they do sin, they have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1Jo 2:1-2. *William Greenhill.*

Verse 25. *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken* (he doth not say, In my experience I never saw the righteous afflicted, but, I never saw him left or forsaken in his affliction), *and I never saw his seed begging their bread:* he puts in that, because begging of bread, especially in the commonwealth of Israel, and in the state of the Jews, was a note of utter dereliction! for though God had told them that they should have the poor always with them, yet he had given an express law that there should be no beggar among them; therefore, saith he, I have not seen the righteous so forsaken, that they should be forced to live by begging. If any say, that David himself begged, he asked bread of Abimelech and of Nabal; I answer, it is a good rule, and it resolves the case; transitory cases, and sudden accidents, make no beggars: we must not say, David was a beggar, or begged his bread, because once he was in a strait and asked bread of Abimelech; and in a second strait sent to Nabal: in such sudden cases, the richest man in the world may be put to ask a piece of bread. A good man may fall into such wants, but good men are rarely, if ever or at all, left in them. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 25. *Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* Perhaps it will be objected that there have been many righteous men poor: but the place speaketh of a righteous charitable man, for so the following verse showeth, which saith, "He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." And who hath seen such a one or his seed to be brought to such poverty as to beg his bread? When our Saviour Christ had fed four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes, all being filled, seven baskets full of fragments were gathered up: and it is Saint Austin's note upon it, *crescit dum impenditur victus, sic eleemosyna si indigentibus erogetur*, the victuals in expending were augmented, and so is the alms which is given to the poor. *Michael Jermin.*

Verse 25. *Yet have I not seen, etc.* I believe this to be literally true in all cases. I am now grey headed myself; I have travelled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations in life; and I have not, to my knowledge, seen one instance to the contrary. I have seen no *righteous man forsaken*, nor any *children* of the *righteous begging their bread*. God puts honour upon all that fear him; and thus careful is he of *them*, and of their *posterity*. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 25. *Begging bread.* This is not meant of an occasional seeking relief in want (for so David himself desired bread of Abimelech, 1Sa 21:3, and he and his soldiers desired some supply of victuals from Nabal, 1Sa 25:8); but of living in a continual way of begging from door to door, which is denounced as a curse against the wicked Ps 109:10, "Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg." Nor doth it hence follow, that neither the righteous man, nor his seed, are ever brought to this sad degree of misery; but only that it doth so rarely happen, that David in all his time had never seen it. *Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 25. This observation of the psalmist will be found generally verified. We find indeed exceptions, as in the case of Eli's family. But this was the result of his defect of character as a righteous man. And we know that the promises must fail, if they neglect the means necessary to their accomplishment (see Ge 18:19). But some think that this verse admits of an explanatory supplement; and render the last clause thus, "Nor his seed (forsaken, though) begging bread." *David Davidson, in "The Pocket Commentary, 1836."*

Verse 25. These words must be taken as a general observation, not absolutely verified in every case; yet the strict fact is, I apprehend,

that the immediate descendants of truly pious persons are very seldom, if ever, reduced to such extremities, unless by their own great imprudence, or their abandoned practices. *William Walford*.

Verse 25. Here he records an experiment of his (such as whereof Psalm 119 is mostly made up), and if other men's experiences agree not altogether with his, it is no wonder: kings use not to mind beggars. *John Trapp*.

Verses 25-26. Many persons are solicitously perplexed how their children shall do when they are dead; yet they consider not, how God provided for them when they were children. Is the Lord's arm shortened? Did he take thee from thy mothers breasts; and when thy parents forsook thee (as the psalmist saith), became thy Father? And cannot this experienced mercy to thee, persuade thee that he will not forsake thine? Is not "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever?" "I have been young, "saith David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, "that is granted, nay, "not his seed begging bread."

Many distrustful fathers are so carking for their posterity, that while they live they starve their bodies, and hazard their souls, to leave them rich. To such a father it is said justly, *Dives es haeredi, pauper inopsque tibi*. Like an over kind hen, he feeds his chickens, and famishes himself. If usury, circumvention, oppression, extortion, can make them rich, they shall not be poor. Their folly is ridiculous; they fear lest their children should be miserable, yet take the only course to make them miserable; for they leave them not so much heirs to their goods as to their evils. They do as certainly inherit their fathers' sins as their lands: "God layeth his iniquity for his children: and his offspring shall want a morsel of bread." Job 21:19.

On the contrary, the good man *is merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed*. What the worldling thinks shall make his posterity poor, God saith shall make the good man's rich. The precept gives a promise of mercy to obedience, not confined to the obedient man's self, but extended to his seed, and that even to a thousand generations, Ex 20:6. Trust, then, Christ with thy children; when thy friends shall fail, usury bear no date, oppression be condemned to hell, thyself rotten to the dust, the world itself turned and burned into cinders, still "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed*. He, the good man, is *merciful to himself*, for mercy, like charity, begins at home; he is not afraid to eat a good meal because he hath children. And he is merciful to *others* too; for he will lend and do good to whom he can, and then his seed fares the better for it. Mark, that the more he gives and lends in doing works of mercy, the better it is for his children; for those children are ever best provided for whose parents bear this mind—they had rather trust God with their children, than their children with riches; and have made this their hope, that though they die, yet God lives. Did but one of those rich and wretched parents (who pinched and pined himself to make his son a gentleman, forsooth), rise from the dead, and see that proverb of Solomon fulfilled in himself, "He begetteth a son, and in his hand is nothing; "I persuade myself, the rumination of this would afflict him in his soul as much as any one pain of sense, even in hell itself. O consider this, you that now live and see it in others; and remember withal, that if your goods be either ill gotten, or worse kept, it may be your children's case when you are departed, and feel it, though you see it not. *Matthew Griffith*.

Verse 28. *For the Lord..forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.* How? since they die as others do. Mark the *antithesis*, and that will explain it. *They are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* They are preserved in their posterity: children are but the parents multiplied, and the parents continued; it is *nodosa aeternitas*; when the father's life is run out to the last, there is a knot tied, and the line is still continued by the child. I confess temporal blessings, such as long life, and the promise of an happy posterity, are more visible in the eye of that dispensation of the covenant; but yet God still taketh care for the children of his people, and many promises run that way that belong to the gospel administration, and still God's service is the surest way to establish a family, as sin is the ready way to root it out. And if it doth not always fall out accordingly, yet for the most part it doth; and we are no competent judges of God's dispensations in this kind, because we see providence by pieces, and have not the skill to set them together; but at the day of judgment, when the whole contexture of God's dealings is laid before us, we shall clearly understand how *the children of his servants continue, and their seed is established.* Ps 102:28. *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land,* or the earth. There is clearly an emphasis in the repetition of the same promise in the same terms which ought to have been uniformly rendered throughout Ps 37:9,11,22,29,34. And it cannot be doubted, that there is a reference to the new heavens and the new earth of Isa 56:17 2Pe 3:13. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 29. *The righteous shall inherit the land,* etc. Compare Mt 5:5. Consider well this Bible truth, of the future exclusive possession of the earth by the righteous. The millennial kingdom furnishes a fuller explanation. *T. C. Barth.*

Verse 31. *The law of his God is in his heart, etc.* The flock of sheep that's indisposed and unwilling to drive, start out of the way into every lane's end, one this way and another that; and just so is it with an unwilling heart; one thought starts this way, and another that, and it's a piece of skill to drive them through. But a willing heart, a heart prepared and ready to every good work, it flies quite up an end, and delights itself in the Lord. *Richard Steele.*

Verse 31. (*first clause*). He hath a Bible in his head, and another in his heart; he hath a good treasure within, and there hence bringeth good things. *John Trapp.*

Verses 32-33. The Jews *watched* that Just One daily and hourly; they *sought to slay him*, and did so; but *Jehovah left him not in their hands*, but vindicated his innocence by raising him from the dead. *George Horne.*

Verse 34. *Wait on the Lord, etc.* He that truly trusts in God will stay God's time, and use God's means, and walk in God's way, though it seem round about; they will not neglect their souls for haste; they know this would be to make more haste than good speed. Nor would they step out of the way, the way that is holy and righteous, though they may escape a loss, an affliction by it, though they might gain some desirable advantage by it. True faith goes leaning upon God, and therefore will *keep his way*. He that will not be liberal for the promoting and honouring of the gospel; he that fears poverty or affliction more than he fears sin; he that is more careful for the things of the world than for his soul; he that takes indirect or suspected courses, to get, or increase, or secure his estate; he that is not jealous or watchful, lest his cares for the world (when he is much engaged therein) should be immoderate—it is plain he doth not trust God with his estate; and that he does not trust God for his estate,

whatever he thinks or pretend, he does not trust God for his soul, for his salvation; his hopes of heaven and salvation are but presumption. *David Clarkson.*

Verse 34. *Wait on the Lord.* Bind him not to a day, wake not the Beloved till he please. *John Trapp.*

Verse 34. *Wait...keep.* While we are waiting let us take heed of wavering. Go not a step out of God's way, though a lion be in the way; avoid not duty to meet with safety; keep God's highway, the good old way Jer 6:16, the way which is paved with holiness. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness." Isa 35:8. Avoid crooked paths, take heed of turning to the left hand, lest you be set on the left hand. Sin doth cross our hopes, it barricades up our way; a man may as well expect to find heaven in hell, as in a sinful way. *Thomas Watson.*

Verse 35. *Green bay tree.* The LXX translate (Nner xrzak) as if it were (Nnbl xrzak), "Like the cedar of Lebanon; "but (Nner xrza) according to Delitzsch, means a noble timber tree, one that in the course of centuries of growth has acquired a gigantic trunk, and an umbrageous, dome like crown.

Verse 35. *Green bay tree.* The marginal rendering—"a tree that groweth in his own soil"—is, no doubt, the true one. The idea generally formed of this passage by the reader of the English Bible is that the tree referred to was the bay laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), or cherry laurel of our gardens. But this plant belongs to an entirely different family. The bay and the Portugal laurels, whose forms of growth and evergreen leaves make them highly ornamental in shrubberies, belong to a subfamily (*Drupaceae*, Lind.) of the rose tribe (*Rosaceae*), but the bay tree proper, which flourisheth luxuriantly in Southern Europe, is the type of the laurel family

(*Lauraceae*). Several circumstances make it unlikely that the true bay tree represents the Hebrew *esrach*. There is no evidence that it was ever so plentiful in Palestine as to be chosen by the psalmist in an illustration in a poem for popular use. It is indeed to be met with, but that chiefly in localities on the borders of the eastern shore of the Great Sea. The chief objection to the supposition that the bay tree was referred to by the royal poet is to be found in the Psalm itself. Having mentioned it in the lines quoted above, he adds, "Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." The idea here is not one which could be represented and illustrated by an evergreen plant, slow of growth, and yet reaching in maturity a height of above thirty feet. The words demand a quick growing tree, in a soil more than usually favourable to its growth. Thus planted, and shooting up in calm and sunshine, it would attract every eye; but when the storm broke over it, when the strong wind swept imperiously through its branches, it would not stand. Torn up by the root, and its timber comparatively useless, like Abraham's dead, it would be buried out of sight. And thus with the wicked. He was sought and could not be found. *John Duns, D.D., F.R.S.E., in "Biblical Natural Science."*

Verse 35. We see no force in the observation of Dr. Duns; in fact, if there were not other reasons for preferring the translation given in the following note by Wilson, we should see all the more reason to keep to the bay tree. It was a tree of permanence and of long continued verdure, and so the prosperous wicked seem to be. They look as if their happiness would be eternal; yet, for all that, those who carefully note the dealings of providence, observe with holy wonder that divine justice cuts short their glory, and they perish utterly. *C. H. S.*

Verse 35. I have seen the wicked in great power (terrible, fierce, violent), *and spreading himself like a green bay tree* (a tree in its native soil, vigorous, and luxuriant, that had never been transplanted). A striking figure of the ungodly man of the world, firmly rooted in earthly things—his native soil, grown proud and wanton in his prosperity, without fear or apprehension of any reverse. *William Wilson.*

Verse 35. *Like a green bay tree*, which produces all leaves and no fruit. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 35. *I have seen the wicked*, saith David, *in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.* And why like a green bay tree? Because in the winter, when all other trees—as the vine tree, fig tree, apple tree, etc., which are more profitable trees—are withered and naked, yet the bay tree continueth as green in the winter as the summer. So fares it with wicked men when the children of God, in the storms of persecutions, and afflictions, and miseries, seem withered, and, as it were, dead, yet the wicked all that time flourish, and do appear green in the eyes of the world: they wallow in worldly wealth, but it is for their destruction; they wax fat, but it is for the day of slaughter. It was the case of Hophni and Phinehas: the Lord gave them enough and suffered them to go on and prosper in their wickedness; but what was the reason? Because he would destroy them. *J. Gore's Sermon at St. Paul's, 1633.*

Verses 35-36.

—Today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes, tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours upon him:
Third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.

—*William Shakespeare, in Henry VIII.*

Verses 36-37. The hawk flies high, and is as highly prized, being set upon a perch, vervelled with the jingling bells of encouragement, and carried on his master's fist; but being once dead and picked over the perch, is cast upon the dunghill as good for nothing. The hen scrapes in the dust, not anything rewarded when she is alive, but being dead, is brought as a choice dish to her master's table. Thus wicked men are commonly set in high places, and prosper in this life; and good men lie grovelling with their mouths in the dust, as the very underlings of the world; but being once dead, the one is cast into the dungeon of hell, the other advanced to the kingdom of heaven: the one is into Abraham's bosom, whilst the other is tormented with the devil and his angels. *Thomas Westfield, D.D., 1644.*

Verse 37. *Mark...and behold.* Herodotus maketh mention of a custom among the Ethiopians to set the dead bodies of their friends in glazed sepulchres, that their proportions might be obvious to the passengers. How needless soever that custom was, it is doubtless no more than just that the pious lineaments of their minds who die in the Lord should be presented to the living in the mirror of art. Indeed, commendation after death is the tribute of a religious life. Good works are jewels not to be locked up in a cabinet, but to be set forth to public view. If Christ would have Mary's name remembered in the gospel until the world's end for one box of ointment poured on his head, we cannot imagine that he would have the many pious and charitable deeds of his servants to be buried in oblivion. Consult the Scriptures and you shall scarce find any godly man laid in his grave without an epitaph of honour. View the fathers, and you shall

observe it their practice to honour the death of the good by giving them their deserved praises. *Nathaniel Hardy*.

Verse 37. *The perfect man*, etc.—Divines well distinguish of a double perfection, it is *absoluta* or *comparata*. That is absolutely *perfect*, to which nothing (that it may be accounted truly good) is wanting; and thus He only is *perfectus* who is *in factus*; God, who made all things, and himself is not made, only enjoying an all sufficient perfection, in and of himself. That is comparatively *perfect*, in which, notwithstanding some wants there is a fulness compared with others. Thus every saint is *perfect* in comparison of the wicked among whom he liveth. In this respect it is said of Noah, *That he was a perfect man in his generations*; his grace compared with the wickedness of the old world well deserving the name of perfection; indeed every upright man is *perfect* in comparison of them who are openly bad, or but openly good; stained with wickedness, or but painted with holiness. Thus one saint may be *perfect* if compared with another, the strong Christian in respect of the weak, whom he outstrips in grace and piety: such saints Paul means when he saith, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect;" that is, such as have attained to greater measures of grace than others. It was said of Benaiah, "He was more honourable than thirty, but he attained not to the first three;" and though no saint can ever attain to the perfections of the *first three*, the blessed Trinity, yet many saints may be honourable amongst *thirty perfect* in comparison of those among whom they live.

We must further distinguish of a double perfection, it is *extrinseca* and *intrinseca*. Extrinsic perfection so called, because by imputation, is that which every believer is partaker of through the perfect righteousness of Christ, whereby all his imperfections are covered; in this respect the author to the Hebrews tells us, "That by

one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; "and S. Paul tells the Colossians that they were "complete in him, "meaning Christ. Indeed *omnia Dei mandata tunc facta deputantur, quando id quod non fit ignoscitur*: divine commands are then in God's account fulfilled when our defects for Christ's sake are pardoned; and the evangelical perfection of a Christian consists not *in perfectione virtutum, sed remissionis vitiorum*, in the completion of our graces, but remission of our sins.

Intrinsic perfection, so called because by inhesion, is no less rationally than usually thus distinguished, there is *perfectio partium et graduum*. He is said to be *perfectus, cui nihil deest eorum quae ad statum salutis necessaria*, who wants no graces that accompany salvation; or he is perfect, *cui nihil deest in gradibus gratiarum et virtutum*; who is not defective in the measures of those graces; both these are frequently and fitly illustrated by the resemblance of a child, and a grown man; the one whereof hath all the essential and integral parts of a man, the other a complete use and measure of those parts. *Nathaniel Hardy*.

Verse 37. *The end.* All wise men affect the conclusion to be best: to ride two or three miles of fair way, and to have a hundred deep and foul ones to pass afterward is uncomfortable; especially when the end is worse than the way. But let the beginning be troublesome, the progress somewhat more easy, and the journey's end happy, and there is fair amends. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* Mark him in the setting out, he hath many oppositions; mark him in the journey, he is full of tribulations; but mark in the conclusion, and the end of that man is peace. *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 37. *The end of that man is peace.* Give me leave to determine what it is to end or die in peace. To end in peace with *Euthymius*, is to end in *pace cogitationis*, in peace of mind as it is opposed to doubting. To end in peace with *Cyprian*, is to end in *pace securitatis*, in peace of security, as it is opposed to final falling. To end in peace with *Origen*, is to end in *pace conscientiae*, in peace of conscience as it is opposed to despairing. To end in peace with old *Irenaeus*, is to end in *pace mortis*, in the peace of death as it is opposed to labouring. Again, to end in peace, is to end in *pace Dei*, in the peace of God which passeth all understanding, *i.e.*, far beyond men's apprehensions. To end in peace, is to end in *pace proximi*, in peace with our neighbours, *i.e.*, when no outcries or exclamations follow us. And lastly, to end in peace, is to end in *pace sui*, in peace with ourselves, *i.e.*, when no distractions or perturbations of mind molest us. *Richard Parre.*

Verse 37. The text may be divided into these two parts. Here is 1. The godly man's *property*; and 2. The godly man's *privilege*. His property is perfection; his privilege is peace. Here is the saint's *character* and the saint's *crown*: he is characterised by uprightness or sincerity, and crowned with peace. Here is the Christian's *way* and his *end*, his *motion*, and his *rest*. His way is holiness, his end happiness; his motion is towards perfection and in uprightness; his rest is peace at his journey's end. *John Whitlock, in a Funeral Sermon entitled, "The Upright Man and his Happy End, "1658.*

Verse 37. Time would fail me to tell how Christians die, nor can anything save the pen of the recording angel who has stood by their bed of death and borne them to Abraham's bosom narrate the unnumbered instances of their delightful departure from the present world, which verify the truth of the Bible. "I could never have

believed, "said a dying saint, "that it was so delightful a thing to die, or that it was possible to have such views of the heavenly world as I now enjoy." The memorable Melancthon just before he died, chanted in his sleep the words, "I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." He seemed restless, and on being asked by one near him, "Whether there was anything more that he desired?" replied, *Aliud nihil nisi coelum*—nothing more, unless it be heaven. *Gardiner Spring*.

Verse 37. To die well be sure to live well; we must not think to have Lazarus's death, and Dive's life; like him in Plutarch that would live with Craesus, as he said, but he would die with Socrates. No, Balaam's wishes are foolish and fruitless: If you would die well, Christians, you must have a care to live well: *qualis vita, finis ita*, if you would die quietly, you must live strictly; if you would die comfortably, you must live conformably; if you would die happily, you must live holily. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. John Kitchin, M.A., 1660.*

Verse 38. *The end of the wicked shall be cut off.* The wicked in this world do easily run up without rub or interruption, many times with acclamations and applause, all the golden steps of honours and preferments; but upon the highest stair they find the most slippery standing, and the top of their earthly felicity is the most immediate and certain descent unto the greatest downfall. They are royally mounted here upon earth, and gallop swiftly over the fair and green plains of plenty and pleasures; but at the end of their race they are overturned horse and man, and tumbled headlong into the pit of destruction. They fairly glide over the sea of this world with full sail, with much calmness and serenity, and richly laden; but in the brightest sunshine, and when they least suspect it, they suddenly and

without recovery, sink into the gulf of darkness and desolation. *Robert Bolton.*

Verse 40. *And the Lord shall help them.* He *shall*, he *shall*, he *shall*. Oh, the rhetoric of God! the safety of the saints! the certainty of the promises! *John Trapp.*

Luther closes his Exposition of the Psalm with the words, Oh, shame on our faithlessness, mistrust, and vile unbelief, that we do not believe such rich, powerful, consolatory, declarations of God, and take up so readily with little grounds of offence, whenever we but hear the wicked speeches of the ungodly. Help. O God, that we may once attain to right faith. Amen.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The art of tranquillity. *W. Jones.*

Verses 1-2. A frequent temptation, and a double corrective—a sight of sinners in death and hell.

Verses 1,2. A frequent temptation, and a double corrective—a sight of sinners in death and hell.

Verse 2. How and when the wicked perish.

Verse 3.

1. A combination descriptive of holy living.

2. A combination descriptive of happy living.

Verse 3. The believer portrayed.

1. His object of trust.

2. His mode of life.

3. His place of abode.

4. His certainty of provision.

Verse 3. (*last clause*). Read it in four ways.

1. "Certainly fed, "or the certainty of supply.

2. "Fed in verity, "or the sufficiency of the provision for soul and body.

3. "Fed on truth, "or the spirituality of the provision.

4. "Feed on truth, "or the duty of choosing such provision.

Verse 4. Explain the delight and the desire of the believer, and show the connection between them.

Verses 5-6. The higher life.

1. Based on hearty resignation.

2. Sustained by faith.

3. Constantly unfolded by the Lord.

4. Consummated in meridian splendour.

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Verse 6. Sweet comfort for slandered saints. Where their character now is. Who shall reveal it. The gradual yet sure manner of the revelation, and the glorious conclusion.

Verse 7. *Rest in the Lord.* What? Where? When? Why? How?

Verse 7. Peace, patience, self possession.

Verse 7. Stillness in God. *Bishop Wilberforce.*

Verse 7. *Rest in the Lord.*

1. Rest in the *will* of God, for whatever he wills is for your good, your highest good.
2. Rest in the *love* of God, and often meditate on the words of Jesus on this point, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."
3. Rest in the *mercy* of God.
4. Rest in the *word* of God.
5. Rest in the *relation* thy God fills to thee; he is the Father.
6. Rest in the Lord as he is manifested in Jesus, thy God *in covenant.*

James Smith.

Verse 8. A SERMON FOR THE FRETFUL.

1. *Cease* from present anger. It is madness, it is sin; it shuts out our prayers; it will grow into malice; it may lead to worse.

2. *Forsake it* for the future. Repent of it, watch temper, discipline thy passions, etc.

3. *Avoid* all kindred feelings of fretfulness, impatience, envy, etc., for they lead to evil.

Verse 9. How the humble are the true lords of the land.

Verse 10.

1. Consider what the departed sinner has left. Possessions, joys, honours, aims, hopes, etc.

2. Consider where he has gone.

3. Consider whether you will share the same lot.

Verses 10-11. Terror to the wicked: comfort for believers. *A. Farindon.*

Verse 11. The meek man's delight, or "the harvest of a quiet eye."

Verse 14. *Upright conversation.*

1. What it excludes. The horizontal or earthly, the crooked or crafty, the slanting or sinister.

2. What it includes. Motive, object, language, action.

3. What it achieves. It stands like a pillar; it supports like a column; it ascends like a tower; it adorns like a monument; it illuminates like a Pharos.

Verse 15. The self destructive nature of evil.

Verse 16. How to make much of a little.

Verses 16-17.

1. The owners contrasted.
2. The possessions compared.
3. The preference given.
4. The reasons declared.

Verse 17. (*last clause*).

1. The favoured persons.
2. Their evident need, "upholding."
3. Their singular blessedness, "upheld, "above trial, under trial, after trial.
4. Their august Patron.

Verse 18. The comforts derivable from a consideration of the divine knowledge. The eternity of the righteous man's possessions.

Verse 18.

1. The *persons*, "the upright."

2. The *period*, "their days." These are known to God. (1) He knows them *kindly* and *graciously*; (2) He knows their *number*; (3) He knows the *nature* of them.

3. The *portion*, "their inheritance shall be for ever."

—William Jay.

Verse 18 (*last clause*). What it is. How they come by it. How long they hold it.

Verse 19. Good words for hard times.

Verse 21. Monetary transactions tests of character.

Verse 22. The divine blessing the secret of happiness. The divine displeasure the essence of misery.

Verses 23-24.

1. The divine predestination.
2. The divine delight.
3. The divine support.

Verse 24. Temporary trials.

1. To be expected.
2. Have their limit.
3. Have their results.
4. Our secret comfort under them.

What may be. What cannot be. What shall be.

Verse 25. Memorandum of an aged observer.

Verse 26. The righteous man's merciful disposition, generous action, and rich reward.

Verse 26. The benediction of the good man's family: what it is, and what it is not.

Verse 27. Negative, positive, remunerative.

Verse 28.

1. The Lord's love of right.
2. His faithfulness to the righteous.
3. Their sure preservation thus doubly guaranteed.
4. The doom of the wicked thus certified.

Verse 29. Canaan as a type of the righteous man's inheritance.

Verse 30. *Our speech* as a test of godliness.

Verse 31.

1. The best thing.
2. In the best place.
3. With the best of results.

Verses 32-33. Our enemies; their inveterate malice; our safeguard and justification.

Verse 34.

1. A twofold admonition: (a) *Wait on the Lord.* (b) *And keep his way;* wait and work, wait and walk, get grace and exercise it.

2. A twofold promise: (a) *He shall exalt thee to inherit the land*; God is the source of all elevation and honour. (b) *When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it*; and they will be cut off. *William Jay*.

Verse 34. Patient faith, persevering holiness, and promised exaltation.

Verse 34 (*last clause*). Emotions caused in the godly by a sight of the sinner's doom.

Verse 34. (*last clause*). The wicked are often cut off 1. Even *in life*, from their places, and riches, and prospects. 2. At *death* they are cut off from all their possessions and comforts. 3. In *the last day* they will be cut off from "the resurrection of life." *William Jay*.

Verses 35-37. Three memorable scenes.

1. The imposing spectacle.
2. The astounding disappearance.
3. The delightful exit.

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1. The imposing spectacle.
2. The astounding disappearance.
3. The delightful exit.

Verses 39-40.

1. The doctrines of grace condensed.
2. The experience of the gracious epitomised.
3. The promises of grace summarised.

4. The grandest evidence of grace declared: *because they trust in him.*

MONERGISM BOOKS

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions July 2020 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, Oregon, 97068